

Business networking and coaching at your doorstep

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Companies in Los Alamos, Mora, Rio Arriba, Sandoval, San Miguel, Santa Fe and Taos Counties can take advantage of an integrated and comprehensive entrepreneurial support system of individual “network facilitators” funded in part through Los Alamos National Security, LLC (LANS), the company that manages Los Alamos National Laboratory. Under the sponsorship of LANS’s Los Alamos Connect program, the network facilitators provide free one-on-one coaching at an entrepreneur’s place of business or other convenient local location.

Andrea Gottschalk, long-time owner of Unikat Fine Jewelry in Las Vegas, New Mexico, has been Los Alamos Connect’s network facilitator for San Miguel County since last September and already has helped several entrepreneurs reach the next stage of their business plan. Gottschalk also organizes a monthly business forum and other local networking events; once a week discusses business matters on KLVF-KFUN’s Over the

Back Fence radio show; and is the vice-president of the Las Vegas First Independent Business Alliance, a nonprofit association of independently owned businesses located in or near Las Vegas.

“The Las Vegas First Independent Business Alliance’s motto is ‘spend your money where your house is,’” said Gottschalk. “The association’s goal to help nurture a viable local economy is a natural fit with Los Alamos Connect. I have found my involvement with both organizations highly rewarding.”

One of Gottschalk’s Los Alamos Connect clients is the New Mexico Craft Brewing Company, which currently sells beer on tap through local restaurants but would like to begin bottling its products and sell them in stores. “I helped the brewing company by putting them in touch with funding sources and with Val Alonzo, business expansion and retention manager for Los Alamos Connect,” Gottschalk explained. “I try to offer whichever resources and services best meet each entrepreneur’s needs.”

Saving one of the last two drive-in movie theaters in New Mexico was another of Gottschalk’s Los Alamos Connect projects. The Fort Union Drive-In in Las Vegas, built in 1958, was once praised for having state-of-the-art film projectors, but over time the projectors had become obsolete, with the film industry phasing out the 35 mm film the drive-in was using and switching to digital format. While Gottschalk does not take credit for finding the Taos investor who stepped in to purchase the digital equipment for the Fort Union Drive-In, she does believe that the “save the drive-in” campaign that she assisted with created much of the surrounding media attention and public awareness.

As she works with Los Alamos Connect clients, Gottschalk is particularly impressed by companies and individuals who “pay it forward” and begin to help others in response to having been helped themselves.

“The El Fidel Hotel and El Fidel Restaurant in Las Vegas are good examples,” Gottschalk noted. “Both started out as Los Alamos Connect clients a while back and now the hotel provides the space for my monthly business forum and the restaurant furnishes a small buffet and beverages—both without charging us anything. The Love Music store, another former Los Alamos Connect beneficiary, has been wonderful as well. They faithfully lend us an amplification system for the forum at no cost.”

As of July 31, 2013, [Los Alamos Connect](#) has served 602 northern New Mexico businesses since opening its doors in 2006. To find a Los Alamos Connect network facilitator near you, visit the organization’s [Entrepreneurial Networking](#) page. You also might like to learn more about the [Regional Development Corporation](#) in Española, which administers Los Alamos Connect and offers a variety of additional economic development opportunities.

Los Alamos National Laboratory

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